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January 2, 2015

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Mitchell H. Katz, M.D.
Director



SUBJECT: **ATTORNEY GENERAL HEARING ON THE SALE OF
ST. FRANCIS MEDICAL CENTER**

On September 16, 2014, I testified to your Board concerning the risks inherent in the sale of St. Francis Medical Center. In particular, St. Francis Medical Center plays a large role in providing trauma services in the southeast central portion of Los Angeles County. Loss of the trauma center would substantially damage our system, especially if there were not sufficient time to develop an alternative trauma center at MLK Community Hospital.

The sale of St. Francis Medical Center along with 5 other hospitals previously run by the Daughters of Charity to Prime Healthcare Services is pending the review by the State Attorney General Kamala D. Harris. On Monday January 6, 2015, she is holding a hearing in the Lynwood area. I will be testifying on the importance of the trauma center, psychiatric services, and charity care provided by St. Francis Medical Center, and our concern that these valuable community assets not be lost in the sale to Prime Health Care. I will speak in favor of requiring Prime Health Care to maintain the emergency services, trauma center and psychiatric services for at least 10 years. My testimony is attached.

As always, I welcome any guidance or comments. Please contact me at (213) 240-8101. Thank you.

MHK:jp

Attachment

c: Chief Executive Office
County Counsel
Executive Office, Board of Supervisors

January 5, 2015

Testimony for Attorney General Hearing Regarding St. Francis Medical Center

I am Dr. Mitch Katz and I am the Director of the Los Angeles County Health Services Department. We are the second largest safety net system in the United States, and in addition to our 4 hospitals, and extensive ambulatory services, we direct the Emergency Medical Services Agency for the County.

I am here because of our concern about the future of St. Francis Medical Center. It is a critical part of the health care system in Los Angeles County, serving a highly dense and medically underserved region of Los Angeles. St. Francis has a strong tradition as a non-profit hospital dedicated to serving the needs of its South Los Angeles community, providing a volume of charity care (6% of gross patient revenue) that far surpasses the State average.

Since its designation as a trauma center in 1986, St. Francis has become a cornerstone of the LA County trauma network, serving a trauma catchment area with a population of over 690,000. It is one of the County's busiest trauma centers, with over 2100 trauma cases per year, and with the highest rate of penetrating trauma in Los Angeles County. St. Francis also manages multiple trauma prevention programs for the community, such as training in advanced trauma care for nurses and instruction in violence prevention and intervention.

St. Francis has proven to be a highly responsible, community-minded partner over the years. When the Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital closed to trauma in 2004, St. Francis agreed to expand their trauma catchment area and add the resources needed to take additional trauma patients. When the Martin Luther King Jr. Hospital closed in 2007, St. Francis agreed to accept additional patients from the paramedics and took the lead in coordinating patient destinations across the region.

St. Francis's strong dedication to the community is also demonstrated through other non-trauma programs. These include the hospital's role as a paramedic Base hospital, Emergency Department Approved for Pediatrics, part of the Disaster Resource Center network, and a certified STEMI (cardiac) and Stroke Center.

St. Francis is also one of a handful of private hospitals with LPS designation, able to care for patients experiencing psychiatric emergencies or requiring inpatient psychiatric care. Its inpatient, emergency, and mobile crisis services are indispensable in the County. A loss of these services at St. Francis would stress an already tenuous mental health system.

The potential sale of St. Francis to a for-profit provider system would likely result in less benefit for the community. For-profit hospitals have an obligation to their shareholders which often supersedes the needs of the community. We are concerned that Prime Healthcare Services will divert from St. Francis's historic commitment to serving the community through provision of emergency, trauma, and psychiatric services—services which would take years for us to replace.

Were Prime Healthcare Services to eliminate trauma services it would take several years for the new Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital to build the necessary infrastructure, staffing, and processes required to be designated as a trauma center in South Los Angeles. In the meantime, patients in the region will be sent to surrounding trauma centers, leading to increased transport times

and emergency department wait times, and potentially delays in obtaining pre-hospital emergency services.

These are not acceptable outcomes. I agree with the recently released Impact Statement, prepared for the California Attorney General's Office, and ask that any sale, if it is allowed to proceed, would safeguard critical emergency, trauma, and psychiatric services for at least ten years. Medical care is a complex, interwoven safety net. Any loss of capacity and actual provision of these services would have a significant detrimental effect on the immediate community, but would also have adverse ripple effects across the County. We cannot allow this to happen.